LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Please reconsider the claims as follows:

1. (currently amended) A method, comprising:

reducing the power level of an optical signal propagating in an optical fiber path in response to the absence of a counter-propagating supervisory signal in the optical fiber path; ~~and~~

reducing counter-propagating optical power in response to the absence of the optical signal; and

restoring the power level of the optical signal in response to the presence of the counter-propagating supervisory signal.

2. (canceled)

3. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of reducing the power level of the optical signal and the step of reducing counter-propagating optical power are performed substantially at the same time.

4. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the step of reducing the power level of the optical signal comprises at least one of:

reducing pump power supplied by at least one pump source coupled to the optical fiber path; and

reducing gain supplied by at least one optical amplifier coupled to the optical fiber path.

5. (previously presented) The method of claim 4, wherein the step of reducing the counter-propagating optical power comprises reducing counter-propagating pump power supplied by at least one pump source coupled to the optical fiber path.

6. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the power level of the optical signal is reduced by a predetermined amount such that harm from an optical signal emanating from a fault in the optical fiber path is substantially reduced.

7. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the counter-propagating optical power is reduced by a predetermined amount such that harm from an optical signal emanating from a fault in the optical fiber path is substantially reduced.

8. (canceled)

9. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of restoring the counter-propagating optical power in response to a notification of the presence of the counter-propagating supervisory signal.

10. (currently amended) A method, comprising:

a) detecting loss of a supervisory signal counter-propagating in an optical fiber path at a first network element;

b) responsive to the loss of the supervisory signal in the optical fiber path, reducing the power level of an optical signal output to the optical fiber path from the first network element by a predetermined amount;

c) detecting loss of the optical signal propagating in the optical fiber path at a second network element; ~~and~~

d) responsive to the loss of the optical signal, reducing counter-propagating optical power output from the second network element by a predetermined amount; and

e) restoring the power level of the optical signal in response to the presence of the counter-propagating supervisory signal.

11. (canceled)

12. (previously presented) The method of claim 10, wherein the steps b) and d) are performed substantially at the same time.

13. (original) The method of claim 10, wherein step b) comprises at least one of:

reducing pump power supplied by at least one pump source coupled to the optical fiber path in the first network element; and

reducing gain of at least one optical amplifier coupled to the optical fiber path in the first network element.

14. (previously presented) The method of claim 10, wherein step d) comprises reducing counter-propagating pump power supplied by at least one pump source coupled to the optical fiber path in the second network element.

15. (currently amended) The method of claim 10, further comprising:

[[e]] f) responsive to the loss of the optical data signal, reducing counter-propagating optical signal power output from at least one additional network element by a predetermined amount.

16. (currently amended) A network element adapted for use in an optical transmission system, comprising:

a first gain element, for providing an upstream optical signal to an upstream optical fiber path;

a controller, for reducing the power level of the upstream optical signal generated by the first gain element to the upstream optical fiber path in response to the absence of a counter-propagating supervisory signal in the upstream optical fiber path, wherein responding to the absence of the counter-propagating supervisory signal obviates a need for the downstream element to notify the network element of a fault in the optical fiber path;

a second gain element, for providing a counter-propagating downstream optical signal to an downstream optical fiber path; and

the controller, for reducing the power level of the counter-propagating downstream optical signal generated by the second gain element to the downstream

optical fiber path in response to the loss of an optical signal propagating in the downstream optical fiber path.

17. (original) The network element of claim 16, wherein the controller, in response to the absence of the counter-propagating supervisory signal, provides an indication to a downstream network element that the supervisory signal is absent.

18. (original) The network element of claim 16, wherein the network element comprises a repeater.

19. (original) The network element of claim 18, wherein the at least one gain element comprises at least one of an optical amplifier and a pump source.

20. (previously presented) In a lightwave communication system having a plurality of network elements for supplying an optical signal adapted for transmission in an optical fiber path, an apparatus for controlling power of an optical signal propagating in the optical fiber path comprising:

means for detecting loss of a supervisory signal counter-propagating in the optical fiber path;

a first automatic power reduction circuit for reducing the power level of an optical signal output to the optical fiber path from a first network element by a predetermined amount in response to the loss of the supervisory signal in the optical fiber path;

means for detecting loss of the optical signal propagating in the optical fiber path; ~~and~~

a second automatic power reduction circuit for reducing counter-propagating optical power output from a second network element by a predetermined amount in response to the loss of the optical signal; and

means for restoring the power level of the optical signal output in response to the presence of the counter-propagating supervisory signal.

21. (canceled)